



SAFETY ALERT

Life - Safety Critical Rigging

A fisherman onboard a Stonington based scalloper suffered a serious, potentially life threatening injury when a cargo line parted, dropping a scallop drag onto his head on March 4, 1997.

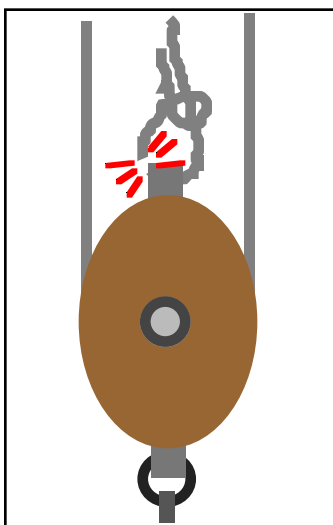
The vessel, rigged as a side dragger, was using a 3/4" nylon line rigged as a luff tackle to suspend the drag above the sorting table. In this incident, the crew had just completed dropping the contents of the drag onto the work deck of the vessel. They were preparing to reset the drag overboard when the nylon line parted.

Coast Guard personnel examined the line and found it had parted at the standing end of the line, where the line was made to the becket of the tail block. Chafing action caused by the steel becket had cut into the fibers of the line, reducing the strength of the line and resulting in its failure under load.

The standing end of the line had been secured to the becket of the tail block with a knot, which was not fitted with a thimble to protect the line from chafing damage. Additionally, the use of a knot instead of an eye splice to terminate the line created an unnecessary weak point. Knots will reduce the effective strength of a line by as much as 50 percent.



This 3/4" nylon line was in service for only 60 days prior to its failure. The tail block was lost in the incident. The bowline in this line was used to recover the drag after the accident.



This incident points out the need for commercial fishermen to ensure that life-safety critical rigging is installed and maintained in top condition. Life-safety critical rigging includes any rigging component that is involved in suspending weights above the heads of crew members, or rigging systems that lift heavy weights that may endanger the structure or stability of a vessel in the case of failure. When using fiber lines in life-safety critical rigging, only eye splices with thimbles should be considered acceptable terminations.

For further information on this Safety Alert contact:

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The cargo line failed where made to the tail block [left].

All eyes in fiber or wire rope in life-safety critical rigging should be fitted with protective thimbles [right].